



City of Santa Barbara
Airport Department

Meeting: 09/25/19
Agenda Item No. 11

DATE: September 25, 2019
TO: Airport Commission
FROM: Henry Thompson, Airport Director 
SUBJECT: Santa Barbara Airport Marketing Efforts

RECOMMENDATION:

That Commission receive a presentation about the Airport's marketing efforts planned for the fiscal year 2020.

DISCUSSION:

The Airport's marketing efforts have evolved considerably in the past nearly three years since it completed a new marketing plan. The 2017-2019 marketing plan sought to focus the Airport's limited marketing resources on communication channels most likely to reach targeted audiences, and also provide more possibilities for measuring return on investment (ROI). In addition, marketing efforts were more clearly focused on alignment with commercial air service development.

Most of the overarching goals in the marketing plan have been achieved, however, many of the strategies that Airport staff sought to pursue remain unrealized due to limited staff and agency/consultant resources.

Among the goals achieved:

- Increase passenger levels to 850,000 by 2021 (*Goal met in 2019*)
- Increase commercial service to at least 10 nonstop destinations by 2021 (*currently stands at eleven*)
- Initiate one new daily Midwest nonstop to ORD or SLC by 2021 (*SLC service started in 2019*)
- Encourage greater variety in fare levels to make SBA a given choice (*Low cost carriers have benefited travelers*)
- Increase Airport revenues from airline terminal operations by 15% (*Met in 2019*)

One goal that remains elusive is the formation of the Santa Barbara Region Air Service Alliance to support air service development. While the Airport's partnership with Visit Santa Barbara remains strong, the partnerships with the Goleta and Santa Barbara Chambers and their members have not developed as hoped. Leadership changes and internal challenges at these organizations are partly to blame.

Marketing Goals

The marketing plan also stipulated a series of measurable marketing goals which are in need of revision and update in a new 2020-2021 marketing plan. However, the 2017-2019 marketing goals are summarized below, noting progress on them.

- Establish SBA as a unique, not-for-profit community asset and economic driver. (*Work must continue*).
- Engage in one or more champions to carry the message of SBA's value. (*Proved difficult to accomplish in Santa Barbara.*)
- Advertising investments demonstrably result in conversions – departures from SBA. (*Investment choices are showing ROI.*)
- Secure at least \$50,000 in earned media publicity annually. (*With more Internet based media publicity, the traditional means of measuring dollar value of publicity has become irrelevant. A new measure is needed.*)
- Build a social media community of at least 5,000 residents who follow SBA. (*Exceeded 5,000 and growing.*)

Marketing Plan Tactics

Many of the more staffing or budget demanding tactics remain to consider pursuing in the next generation marketing plan in 2020. Examples of tactics that the Airport has not been able to pursue are: catchment area survey research; creation of a social media persona; recruitment of local community supporters; revitalization of the Airport Education Program; Airport 101 roundtables for local media; speakers bureau; hosting of new terminal events; formation of a local Air Service Alliance, and editorial board meetings. The new marketing plan will recognize the Airport's constraints and prioritize which of these or other tactics should be focused on in 2020-2021.

Redesign of FlySBA.com

One key strategy in the 2017-2019 marketing plan has been completed: the redesign of the FlySBA.com website. However, the site has yet to launch and replace the current website due to contractual issues between the City and the website hosting vendor. The redesign of the website began with analysis of the use of the existing site. Staff learned that almost exclusively, visitors to the website were looking for information about commercial air service. In addition, more than 60% of visitors were viewing the website from a mobile device. This, and other key insights, led to a mobile-friendly redesign of the site, a paring down of the number of pages, and a simplification of the site navigation. A ticket price calculator has been added that will allow visitors to calculate their total trip cost as compared to LAX. Some important areas such as aircraft noise information remain on the new site, however, some other information may have been migrated by link to the City's main website or removed if no visitors had viewed the page for an extended period

of time. As with the current website, Airport staff will be able to make changes to the future website once it has launched.

Advertising Investments in 2019-2020

After completing a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in 2018, the Airport refocused its advertising investments more heavily on digital media rather than traditional advertising. The advantages were many, including a greater ability to target audiences, greater reach at a lower cost, and the ability to estimate conversions to real airline bookings from SBA. In FY2020, the Airport will again dedicate the majority of its media budget to online advertising that will drive traffic to the Airport's website and those of SBA's air carriers.

The Airport also will continue its partnership with KEYT television that began in 2017. KEYT is unique for the Santa Barbara region due to its dominance as a television news source. The Airport is the exclusive weekday "sponsor" of the KEYT morning weather forecast with 10: second announcements, such as "Today's weather brought to you by Santa Barbara Airport, with affordable flights to eleven nonstop destinations." Weather reporting is one of the highest visibility segments in any news broadcast. In addition, the Airport produces a 15: second public service announcement/commercial for airing on the station. The television component is reinforced with exposure on KEYT's various digital platforms such as their website and mobile news app.

In the outdoor arena, bus transit advertising with MTD remains highly visible and cost-effective. In online news, the Airport will continue a modest investment in local Noozhawk's daily morning newsletter.

Incentive Marketing Investments

With the addition of new air service that has qualified for the Airport's incentive program, the Airport has worked with Contour Airlines and Delta Air Lines to support carrier-specific air service marketing. As is typical among airports with incentive marketing programs, the airline will propose how they would like to invest the earmarked marketing funds. The Airport provides input to any proposal and reserves the right to approve any messages or images. In the case of both Contour and Delta, the airlines proposed investing their incentive funds in internet banner advertising as a means of driving traffic to their websites to book tickets. Delta's banner advertising for the SBA-SLC service is currently in the market until December.

PREPARED BY: Business Development/Marketing